



The United States Army Field Band

In My Dream

A Celebration of African-American Music

IN MY DREAM: HIGH SCHOOL CHORUS LESSON PLAN #1 **STYLISTIC ASPECTS OF SPIRITUAL SINGING**

OBJECTIVES: Students will sight-read a piece of music with at least 75% accuracy.
Students will compare and analyze two unfamiliar pieces of music.
Students will participate in discussing performance aspects of a piece of music.

MATERIALS: • *In My Dream*: tracks 2 (“Oh Freedom”) and 9 (“Soon I Will Be Done”), and liner notes
• “Oh Freedom” music (accompanies this lesson)
• Pencils

PROCEDURES:

1. Incorporate the following into the standard vocal warm-up:
 - a. rhythmic (on syllables or clapping) excerpts from measures 1 and 5
 - b. sung Mi-Fa-Mi-Re-Mi-Re-Do, rhythm dictated by director (“home to my Lord and be free”)
2. Distribute “Oh Freedom” to choir; sight-read as normally done, whether on “doo,” on solfeggio syllables, or on words. Set aside articulation and dynamics at this point. Sing until students are familiar with their parts and accompany as needed.
3. Play track 2. Have students listen for phrasing and articulation. Discuss how their reading differs from the recording. What aspects of the recording can the choir incorporate into their own performance?
4. Play track 9. What do the lyrics have in common with “Oh Freedom?” What does the style have in common? How can the choir use this song to improve a performance of “Oh Freedom?”
5. Review student phrasing and articulation suggestions as a group, marking them with pencils into the music. Perform “Oh Freedom” with student markings. Allow a few minutes for choir members to evaluate their performance. If it is possible, record the performance for greater objectivity during the discussion.
6. Incorporate today's lesson into further work on learning spirituals as selected by choir director.

EXPLORATION:

1. Team with social studies teachers to place spirituals in the context of slavery by teaching a spirituals unit while students are covering the Civil War.
2. Choose a gospel selection such as track 27 (“Hold On”) or those available commercially. What are some of the differences between gospel music and spirituals? Prepare a gospel selection to contrast with a spiritual in an upcoming performance.
3. Coordinate with visual arts teachers during a spirituals unit. Students could study contemporary art, or create their own visual representations of freedom.
4. Beginning with spirituals and slavery, use music to learn about other oppressed cultures and their traditions. Examples could include the Jewish peoples of Eastern Europe or Spain, Vietnamese or Indonesian cultures under the French, or Irish culture under the British.

ASSESSMENT: Did the students sight-read a piece of music with at least 75% accuracy?
Did the students compare and analyze two unfamiliar pieces of music?
Did the students participate in discussing performance aspects of a piece of music?

NATIONAL STANDARDS*:

- 1b. Students sing music written in four parts, with and without accompaniment.
- 5a. Students demonstrate the ability to read an instrumental or vocal score of up to four staves by describing how the elements of music are used.
- 6c. Students identify and explain compositional devices and techniques used to provide unity and variety and tension and release in a musical work and give examples of other works that make similar uses of these devices and techniques.
- 7a. Students evolve specific criteria for making informed, critical evaluations of the quality and effectiveness of performances, compositions, arrangements, and improvisations and apply the criteria in their personal participation in music.
- 7b. Students evaluate a performance, composition, arrangement, or improvisation by comparing it to similar or exemplary models.
- 7c. Students evaluate a given musical work in terms of its aesthetic qualities and explain the musical means it uses to evoke feelings and emotions.

**From National Standards for Arts Education. Copyright © 1994 by Music Educators National Conference (MENC). Used by permission. The complete National Arts Standards and additional materials relating to the Standards are available from MENC—The National Association for Music Education, 1806 Robert Fulton Drive, Reston, VA 20191.*